1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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ends of the main portion of the sling, and then looped on themselves through a slit near one end.

The bull-roarer and buzzer were both well known to the Gros Ventre, but seem to be only children's toys. They were both called nakaa"ta^n ("making cold," a name given also to the thermometer), probably from the widespread Indian idea that the bull-roarer breeds wind. The buzzer was made of a foot-bone of a buffalo, with a sinew string on each side, by which it was twirled, and then drawn so as to hum. The Arapaho type of buzzer is the same. The Gros Ventre bull-roarer seems to differ from the Arapaho form. Fig. 20 shows one of two very similar models, both of wood. The small, well-marked head, the long taper and point, and the numerous small notches, mark a distinct form. The sinew string is of about the length of the stick handle.

WAR.

Men generally went to war on foot, carrying food and moccasins on their backs. While on the trip they did not boil meat, but roasted it. Scouts, called "wolves," were sent out ahead. When these returned, running in a zigzag course, and shouting, it was a sign that they had seen something. If they had seen lodges, they barked like wolves. While they came, the women in the party stood in a row and sang, having made a pile of buffalo-chips. The "wolves" stopped a short distance away, and the leader of the party went to them. They came with him back to the pile of buffalo-chips, where he stopped, and, facing the party, recounted coups. After this, one of the scouts came before them and reported what he had seen. Upon this, all rushed at the pile of buffalo-chips, and kicked them about. If the enemy were near, they would now take off their heavier clothing, such as their robes, and dress and paint for war.

On returning to their camp victorious, the party approached stealthily, and made a charge upon it, often shooting; and sometimes the people in the tents jumped up out of their sleep in the early morning, thinking they had been attacked. The man who had killed an enemy, the one who had struck him first (whether dead or alive), and the one who had taken his gun, were held in about the same esteem. After the return to camp, a dance was made. Drums were beaten; and the women, who were standing in a curved row, danced in a circle toward the men, who stood in a row, and back again. The women carried the new scalps on sticks. If an enemy were killed near the home camp, his feet and hands might be cut off and carried on sticks, like the scalps. During this dance the man who first

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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The place of the biitaha^{n}wu is not certain, as no informants were found who would positively express themselves on this matter. It is universally regarded as having been the most sacred and most dangerous of all the ceremonies, these qualities being thought to have led to its abandonment before any of the other dances. It can probably be concluded from this that it was last in the series, and performed by the oldest men. 171 796

As among the Arapaho, but somewhat more clearly, each dance refers symbolically to a certain animal. This symbolism is as follows. 171

The fly-dance takes its name from flies or mosquitoes, and was given or instituted by a mosquito. During part of the ceremony the dancers imitate the actions of mosquitoes. 796 825

The crazy-dance has comparatively little reference to any animal. The participants, however, wear anklets of badger-skin, and an entire badger-skin is used in ceremonies at the time of starting the dancing.

The kit-fox lodge was given by the kit-foxes, and a kit-fox skin is used somewhat analogously to the badger-skin in the crazy-dance.

In the dog-dance the dancers of highest degree represent shaggy dogs. It is also said that the participants in the ceremony largely eat dogs during its course. Among the Arapaho a dog is said to have instituted this lodge, and the Gros Ventre have a similar myth. [262]

In the nana^{n}naha^{n}w^{u} the dancers sing for the buffalo, and it is said that they always succeed in causing them to appear near the camp. Among the Arapaho the dancers represent both buffalo and prairie-chickens. The symbolic reference to prairie-chickens among the Gros Ventre is found in their sun-dance; their equivalent of the Arapaho rabbit-tent in this ceremony being called "prairie-chicken tent," and the singers in it "prairie-chickens" and "prairie-hens."

The biitaha^{n}w^{u}, as among the Arapaho, has connection with thunder. The dancers are painted over the body with dots which represent hail. If one of them violates the regulations of the dance, it is thought that it will begin to rain and that the offender may be struck by lightning. The Gros Ventre have an additional symbolic connection of their sun-dance with thunder, which is not strictly paralleled among the Arapaho. [302] [821]

The women in their dance among both tribes represent buffalo, and the actions gone through in this ceremony are in both tribes probably more directly imitative of the animals symbolized than in any of the men's ceremonies.

What has been said about the Arapaho in regard to the relation of the entire ceremonial organization to the lives of the men of the tribe, and in regard to the relative importance of the religious, military, and social functions of the age-companies constituting the organization, appears to apply 171 796 561

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796 729 men are named, their female relatives return to their tents, and cook. When they have prepared food, they all together bring a large quantity of it to the lodge. The men selected carry weapons, and are dressed for war. They are usually mounted. Where they themselves or their horses were wounded, [302] they paint themselves. If they have ridden over an enemy, a man is painted on the breast of the horse. When the food which has been brought by their female relatives has been eaten, these men, two at a time, go through numerous performances of their achievements in battle. This is done each day of the dance.

796 A group of men and women, called, like those in the preliminary singing-tent, "prairie-chickens," and therefore probably the same persons, seem [534] to be the singers for the dance. They beat a rawhide in place of a drum, and hold branches, which, at the end of each song, they shake, shouting.

[271] The dancers may not drink water, no matter how great the heat. If [821] one of them is unable to endure, and a pitying relative gives him even only a drop, a thunderstorm follows, and the offender may be struck by lightning, or one of his horses may be killed by lightning. In case it seems necessary for the dancers to drink, a pipe is taken to one of the old men. If he accepts it and smokes it, he goes to the central tree. He wears a robe with the hair-side out. He has a whistle in his mouth, feathers in one hand, and a crow-skin in the other. He strikes the bill of the crow four [789] times, with a downward motion, against the lightning symbol on the tree. A vessel is held against the tree at the bottom of the symbol, and, after the fourth blow, water is said to run out until the vessel is filled, when it stops. This water is given to the dancers, each of whom drinks a very small quan- [787] tity. The actions of the man producing this water are said to be determined by his personal supernatural vision.

After the four days of the ceremony are completed, the lodge is left standing. All the cloth and clothing that have been attached to it remain [789] in place, and it appears that other clothes, especially of children, are left at the lodge. This is done in order that the children may live a long life.

796 From drawings made by a Gros Ventre, it appears that the buffalo-532 skull is painted with spots, and has its nose and eyes stuffed. Behind it is represented a dancer holding the wheel. He is presumably the pledger of the ceremony. The wheel is bisected by two strings, and has eagle-feathers and down-feathers attached to it. The dancer blows a whistle at the end of which is a plume. The whistle hangs from his neck. At the back of the head is a plume. Lines of paint proceed from his breast to his wrists and ankles. On each of these are four diamonds, two on each upper and lower arm, thigh, and calf. If this is a correct representation, the Gros Ventre use at least one style of painting that is like the most typical Arap-

l: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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775 An old man relates that he once saw something that he thought was a spirit. In full daylight he was hunting horses, and came on a ridge where there were a few pines, while below there was a flat and a stream. Down there he saw a dead cottonwood aflame and a person by the tree who was burning it. Limbs fell down burned off. He thought that it was some one from his own camp who was burning the tree; but he lay down and watched. The person took a fallen limb, carried it to the stream and threw it in, and he could hear it splash and hiss. He saw this a second time and a third time, but, happening to turn his head, when he looked back there was no one there. He waited for some time, but the person did not reappear. Going to the stream, he saw the burned branches and the tree still afire.

[821] The Milky Way is called tsóókanibyaa^{n} ("ghost road"). The dead travel by it.

MYTHOLOGICAL BELIEFS.

776 Bax'aa^{n} is the name of the water-monsters inhabiting rivers, as well as of the thunder. The water-monster is also called byiiça^{n}. It is the enemy of the thunder. This idea is common in the Plains tribes, and it seems probable that the relation into which the thunder and the water-monster were brought through this general idea of the opposition between them, is what has resulted in one name being applied to both of them by this tribe. The description of the water-monster is the usual one. It is long, snake-like, and black, with a long head and turned-up nose and horns. It causes the death of all persons who drown.

That persons drowned are taken by a bax'aa^{n} is believed the more because the monsters are said to have hands like a person. As they have long, sharp teeth, and are known in one recent instance to have eaten a buffalo, it is supposed that they eat the persons whom they drown.

773 776 A hunting-party once saw a water-bax'aa^{n} being carried away through the air by a cloud which extended downward toward the earth. They saw the monster writhing, and turning its tail.

A hunting-party once killed a buffalo at the edge of a river. They were cutting the meat when they saw waves approaching the buffalo. The water rose and was pushed toward the buffalo until it covered it. Then the water receded, and they saw a water-monster lying eating the buffalo. One of the men said he would kill it. The others urged him to desist; but he shot, and struck the animal between the eyes. Then, as it writhed, he declared he would despatch it with his knife. Again they tried to dissuade him; but he said, "I have come to seek death, and am not afraid." Taking his double-edged knife, he killed the monster, and dragged its tail out of the

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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773 was a clean cut through the ice, about two feet wide, the path of the monster.
776 It had moved about in the lake until it reached the bank above which the people were sleeping. The monster had struck this bank, the impression of its head and two curved horns being visible. Then it had turned and gone back to the centre of the lake, and there disappeared, making another path, on each side of which the ice was piled up. The narrator gave to it several pieces of property.

821 It is said that it is not known whether thunders have ever been seen; but old men say that they have seen marks on the ground where one is thought to have alighted. The grass about was scorched, and two zigzag lightning-marks, each forking at the end, extended in opposite directions along the ground.

The people were once camped east of the present reservation. A terrific rainstorm came and passed over them. When they thought it had gone by, there was a fierce clap of thunder, and a man and his wife and their boy were struck by lightning. The man and boy were killed, but the woman is still alive. There were two small holes in the tent, and through the bedding into the ground there extended two small holes of the size of a small calibre bullet-hole. On another occasion, a woman was untying a curtain at the back of the tent in order to keep a bed dry, when lightning struck the tent-pole, and she was killed. The other people in the tent were merely stunned.

Not many years ago a strange thing happened to a man and a woman still living. During a thunderstorm the woman, who had been sitting at the door, went to the back of the tent and sat beside her husband. Lightning struck the tent, and shot a hole through every metal plate, cup, or dish on the ground. Where it entered the tent, it left a mark like a sword. The people then painted the tent dark-blue.

A woman out mourning for her mother on the prairie saw a small thunder-stone (bax'aa^{n}ayāa^{n}). It was creeping slowly, leaving a trail or mark. The woman thought she would leave it, and pick it up later. When she came to the place again in the evening, the stone had vanished. Its trail was still visible, but ended where she had seen it last.

821 The rainbow is called bax'aanāyaa^{n}t ("thunder's fishing-line"). Nāyaa^{n}t seems to mean any fishing-implement.

The whirlwind is called inääçitä^{n}. This is also the name of a red legless water-worm (not a leech).

The three stars of Orion are called "buffalo-bulls." The two below them, to one side, are hunters who were going to shoot them and suddenly found themselves in the sky.

773 The Gros Ventre once lived far north of where they are now, where there
778 were nothing but forests. There they found a metallic object. The object
823

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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buffalo cow, dried and stuffed. This type they would bounce and kick. A popular game played among girls in spring was as follows. The girls holding hands formed a big ring. One girl in the center would have a ball. She would throw it at anyone in the ring. When she hit her chosen victim on the chest with the ball, the girls let go of each other's hands and each ran for a piece of buffalo chip where she would be "safe."[8]

A game played by boys and girls together in the evening was as follows. The children would line up according to size behind the tallest boy who would have in his hand a stick which was smouldering at the end. Each child held on tightly to the one in front of him. The boy holding the stick would try to touch the smallest child at the end of the line. The line would writhe as big sparks would fly and sometimes hair got singed. One old woman, recalling this game, remarked: "I don't know when we would get to bed, we had such a good time!"

Sometimes the children would send one of the group on an errand. Those who stayed behind would wet their hands with their tongues and say: "We will watch this to see if it takes you a long time or not." If their hands were still wet when the member of the group returned, they decided that he had done the errand very quickly.

When there were pretty clouds in the sky a little girl might point one out to the other children and tell them to watch it. Then she would stand at the bank of the river, bending over at the waist and violently flinging her arms from side to side while singing. The others would watch the cloud and tell her that it was disappearing and soon it would be gone. "They used to think they could make the cloud disappear by singing that song."

If a group of girls were playing together and some one boy, say from seven to nine years old, would butt in, the girls would all sit down to show that they resented the intrusion. If the boy did not leave, the girls would then form a circle around him and sing a derisive song. Thus the boy would be shamed and run off. The opportunity for this did not occur very often, since boys from about the age of seven usually went off to be by themselves

[8] For description of ball games and illustration of type of football, see Kroeber, 1908, fig. 23.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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776 second element in the word is the name of the culture hero and trickster, who in the early mythical period taught the Gros Ventres how to pray to the Supreme Being, and how to make a living. The present-day Gros Ventres can give no clue to the etymological meaning of the word ni:hohat, nor can the writer analyze it. The word is also used for spider. The spider is in a certain sense sacred and, if it is killed, rain comes. The spider, the Gros Ventres say, can in spite of its small size do wonderful things with its web, can make it stay anywhere, can climb up and down it, and, in general, is usually master of the situation. The name of the trickster Ni:hohat is ordinarily translated as "white man" by English-speaking Gros Ventres and the translation is derived from a folktale concerning an escapade of Ni:hohat in which he had his hair cut off.[5] Thus it was that when the Gros Ventres first saw the white man with his hair cut short, in contrast to the Gros Ventres' long hair, they called him by the name of the trickster. Consequently, the name for the Supreme Being Ixtciboni:hohat is often rendered in English as "The One Above the White Man" or, in abbreviated form, "The One Above."

The second name for the Supreme Being is Behä:tixtč. The meaning, "the master, boss, head, leader of all" is quite clear (be:-, be:hi, "all"; änä:tixtč, "he is master, boss, head, of group or organization).[6]

The third name Ni:nänä'ätč, is said to be an older form which was still in use in the lifetime of The Boy and Thick, and it was felt that it had the meaning of "study, think, meditate," and that the whole might signify "the being who has control over everything by thought or will,"—a concept which, it may be added, would be quite in keeping with the Gros Ventre idea of the power of sheer thought or thought-wish by human beings. But this

[5] Kroeber, 1907, pp. 72-73, gives a version of this episode which is substantially the same as the one obtained by me.

782 [6] In 1948 The Boy stated that the Gros Ventres addressed the Supreme Being by this term "when they wanted something big, e.g. when they prayed for a good harvest of all the things the earth produced. Thus we are saying a kind of mass prayer indicating that the Supreme Being owns everything. He made it and he owns it, and it was recognized that they depended on him." [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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was supposed to have come on earth far up north, and to have made the rounds of all the tribes, finally reaching the Gros Ventres. The Gros Ventres at first so called the priest, but when they discovered that he ate and slept like themselves, they ceased calling him by this name.

In the sweatlodge rite, to be described later, the first of those invited to sweat was the Supreme Being.[1] In how far such an invitation was anthropomorphically conceived is hard to say; it need not, of course, necessarily have implied anything beyond symbolic deference.

The Boy and Thick stated: "He is not a 'false person.' He is entirely in a class by himself. We think so much of him that we do not dare to try to learn what he looks like. We class him as a kind of shadow. He is the most wonderful and powerful of all beings who have no bodies."

No statues or images or pictographs of any kind were ever made of the Supreme Being, nor were there any symbolic representations of him.

The Supreme Being was alone and one, and, as compared with other sacred or superhuman beings of religion, myth, and folklore, he ranked first. Where prayers included invocation of more beings than one, the Supreme Being's name always came first; in ritual invitations before sweating or partaking of food, he was always invited first. He was, however, much more than *primus inter pares*. He was in a class by himself as not only the most powerful but as the ultimate source of the power possessed by other beings and as the ultimate ruler and controller of these others. Bha'a, the Storm Being, who ranked next in importance to the Supreme Being, was controller of storms, thunder and lightning, and exercised a certain limited autonomy. He had this power and office, however, not of himself, but by delegation from the Supreme Being, and exercised it as the agent of the Supreme Being, as will be explained more fully later. Then, too, while the Gros Ventres through fasting and crying on the hills or prairie sought supernatural power, not directly from the Supreme Being, but from other beings—animals and others—it was the Supreme Being who

[1] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 275.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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reward and punishment for such human behavior exclusively or almost exclusively in this life. At death the souls of all except murderers went to the same spirit habitat, not to the Supreme Being.[13]

The extensive cultural and ethico-social activities of man towards the Supreme Being will form the subject of succeeding chapters. We may merely state here that the Supreme Being easily held the first place in cult, as compared with other beings, and that he bulked large in the Gros Ventre ethico-social conscience.

That the foregoing concept of the Supreme Being was aboriginal with the Gros Ventres and not the result of borrowing from white sources seems clear beyond reasonable doubt from both the external and internal evidence.

First the external evidence. While the Gros Ventres have been known in our literature since 1751, their contacts with the whites before the middle of the last century were relatively slight. They met traders and trappers and an occasional intermarriage with whites occurred, but active missionary work among the Gros Ventres did not begin until 1884.[14]

Of about twenty different informants from whom we gathered our account of the Gros Ventre Supreme Being concept, most were older people, men and women, between the ages of 60 and 90 (in 1938-40) and all of them were positive, from their own memory of pre-missionary days and/or from what they had always heard from their parents or grandparents or other elders, that the belief was part of ancient native tradition and not one derived from the whites or from missionaries. For instance, Bull Head, about 80 years old in 1940, then the oldest living Gros Ventre man, stated that he had known about the Supreme Being as far back as he could remember. Coming Daylight, then about 85, and of

[13] The older name for the abode of the dead was tsɔtci:tän (etymology unknown to informants) but described as "toward the sunset." The more common name was ba:snabe (big sand) which was described as a place "to the north." The Milky Way was called Ghost Trail according to another tradition. No non-human supernatural being was conceived of as in charge of the future abode or as rewarder or punisher of the dead for earthly deeds.

[14] Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 23.

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announcing 'A something has come to camp. Come and look at it.' 776
Everybody turned out. They sized up the mule and considered 825
that it must be a Bha'a. They said: 'He must have come here for a purpose. Let's offer him things.' So they ran back, got things to offer him, returned bringing the children, and walked up and surrounded him. They prayed to the mule and laid one offering on him. Soon he was loaded down, he just stood there. After a while he brayed, at which all the people scattered and ran away. After they came to a stop, however, they decided: 'He must be pleased. That's why he made that noise. He will grant our request. We'll leave him here and move camp.' So they moved at once. But the mule followed them. Then they became afraid and ran away from him. This happened several times. At last they succeeded in hiding from him and losing him."

Bha'a's residence or nest, as described in the story of Blood-Clot, was on the top of a high mountain, where he dwelt with his mate and their two offspring, the young thunders (bha'a:ni0an; -i0an, offspring, children). In the Blood-Clot story the sign of Bha'a's return to the nest was the appearance of a dark heavy cloud toward the sunset (west); of his mate's return, a white cloud in the west, and the arrival of each was marked by a blinding flash of lightning. The Thunderbird sometimes breaks wind and leaves a very bad odor. Two instances of this were recorded,—one when lightning struck Thick's house and left such a smell. 776 821

Bha'a had jurisdiction and control over storms, thunder and lightning, but as previously stated under the paramount rule and control of the Supreme Being, for whom he served as a sort of agent or subordinate, although with a considerable degree of freedom of action.

According to The Boy: "Bha'a has control of lightning and thunder, rules it, and releases it at will. He controls it, he is a sort of general manager; some one still higher controls Bha'a. While Bha'a rules the storm, he does so by a sort of delegated power; he has not the power himself.

"Bha'a's particular job is the storm, thunder and lightning. That is all he does. The Supreme Being is the ruler and uses Bha'a to run this part of the situation and manage it. Bha'a

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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executes the direction or will of the Supreme Being. He is the medium or means by which the Supreme Being works. When a big storm is about to break, a pipe is filled and the Supreme Being is prayed to in the direction from which the storm is coming and is asked to spare the people during this storm, to direct Bha'a not to kill them, to say a word or two to Bha'a himself not to shoot around too close to camp. The people are afraid of Bha'a since he does his job in such a violent way. Even though Bha'a is held in high esteem and is considered an extraordinary being, he is a creature [under control] of the Supreme Being."

Bha'a was closely associated with the Feathered Pipe, not at all with the Flat Pipe.

Bha'a too entered into the Sacrifice Lodge ("Sun dance") as the being who could cause rain and so bring a good season for the food quest and bring coolness and shade in hot weather. While supernatural power was not explicitly sought from Bha'a he might occasionally on his own initiative have pity on a man and give him power to be a great warrior and even to make storms. But on a war expedition the participants would pray to the Supreme Being to be saved from wounds and death; not the slightest thought of Bha'a would enter their minds unless they were overtaken by a bad storm.

It may be added here that, [illegible] violent thunderstorms are common in Gros Ventre territory, [illegible] from lightning are not frequent. The Boy could recall only three such deaths, occurring in Gros Ventre territory during his experience, two on one occasion when he was a young boy and one on a later occasion around 1930.

The word Bha'a is used not only for the Thunderbird but enters into the term also for the water and earth monsters, bha'anbi:'iθän.[10]

The water monster,—or monsters as there appear to be a number of them, for they are reported from various large rivers, and springs where they bathe,—is usually envisioned as a huge,

[10] The Boy explained in 1948: "The word bi:'iθän includes water bugs, crawling bugs, bugs of all kinds; but a snake is never called bi:'iθä, nor will a snake ever be called bha'a. Water monster, no manner how many horns he has, or however much he resemble a snake, is always called bha'anbi:'iθä." [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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Child, and made offering of tobacco and food to earth. Al Chandler explained: "The earth is put in because that is where your living is. You get everything from the earth, fruit, animals, everything to live on, and get everything you eat from there," although ultimately it is the Supreme Being who owns and gives everything. We got one passing casual reference to "mother earth" by Mary Ereaux, and another by Tom Main to earth as being a "spirit" and having a "special keeper," but obtained no later confirmation of or detailed information on these points. In general, earth seems to have played a quite subordinate role in Gros Ventre religious thought and ritual.

The sun was appreciably more prominent, ranking according to some informants next to the Supreme Being, and mentioned as "The One Traveling," or "Passing or Traveling Man" immediately after him in prayers. Another current seems to have assigned a much lower relative rank to the sun, and mentioned sun and moon together, as "Those-who-follow-each-other," and after the Supreme Being and the Four Holy Old Men. In any case the sun was in no sense identified with the Supreme Being, but was his property, work and servant, far below him in dignity, and had not anything like the religious predominance it had in such tribes as the neighboring Blackfoot. The sun did not enter at all into the so-called "Sun Dance" of the Gros Ventres, nor into the Feathered Pipe rite. Prayers and food were offered to the sun, and the sun was invited to sweat in the sweat lodge rite along with but subordinately to the Supreme Being. Individuals would offer a finger joint or bits of their flesh to the sun on such occasions as the grave illness of a relative. While the sun "sees everything, that's why the Supreme Being put it there," the Supreme Being, not the sun, was appealed to as witness in oaths; the widespread American Indian oath formula, "The sun sees me," was not used.

The sun and moon were, according to myth, brothers from the same mother, but were never human beings proper, though they married, the one a frog woman and the other a human female. According to one story, the sun regularly appeared in battle as a man riding a white horse who scared and helped either the Gros

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Ventres or the enemy. According to another, the sun on one occasion delivered seven Gros Ventre men, to be killed by the Crow, into the hands of a Gros Ventre woman captured by the Crow, so the woman claimed. Apart from the incidental inclusion of the moon, bracketed with the sun, in prayers and in invitations to sweat as above stated, there was no specific independent moon cult and in no case, according to our informants, were sacrifices ever made to the moon. Nor, so far as we could discover, was there any star cult, though the stars, or some of them such as those constituting the Great Dipper, the Pleiades, the Bear were seemingly looked upon as in some sense "spirits" or personal beings. In the archaic era, before the flood and Ni:hahat, people used to go in the morning to get fire from the morning star, "the cross," just as in modern times the old people used to go in the morning to get a live coal from a neighbor's hearth instead of using matches. The morning star served also as a "clock." When people were planning to get up unusually early in the morning they would be guided by its position in the heavens. Someone in the lodge would be told: "Go out and see if the cross is up yet."

Among the beings involved in prayers and invited to sweat, after the Supreme Being, were the "Four Old Men," currently referred to by English-speaking Gros Ventres as the "Four Holy Old Men." According to Singer and Coming Daylight there were also, it appears, "Four Old Women," but this statement was not independently confirmed by other informants.

Very little is known about these Four Old Men. The Boy had more than once asked his father about them, but Lame Bull could only say that the Gros Ventres were taught by Ni:hahat to call on them in praying and sweating but that the people did not know who they are. They lived in the very beginning of things, but whether before or after the flood, is not quite clear. They were not human beings. Gros Ventre belief does not associate them with the four winds or cardinal directions, but, vaguely, with the sacred number four, the four "ridges" or stages of full human life, and the four great floods or other great catastrophes or revolutions, of which the first was the primeval flood, that are to occur,

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"nothing compared to the Supreme Being." At an eclipse of the sun the Gros Ventres were much afraid; for they thought that the sun was covering himself and that Atsa: would come around. To ward him off on the occasion of a solar eclipse, the Gros Ventres in recent times would load their guns and shoot up in the air, and so make so much noise that he would be scared away. Then they would all laugh, feeling that they had gotten the best of him. Atsa: also functioned as a bugaboo. When Thomas Main was a boy his parents used to tell him: "If you don't behave, Atsa: will get you." Atsa: was afraid of skunks, as the Gros Ventres of several generations ago learned from the following incident, related by The Boy.[28]

"In the days of Gopher and Prairie Dog Old Man, Atsa: declared war. At that time the Gros Ventres were very numerous. There were only twelve bands but they were so big and there were so many people that when the children played around they would get lost and could not find their way home. When the crier walked around and made his announcements, after only one circle around the camp he was hoarse and was tired from walking. A large part of Gros Ventres went off on a war raid to the east to fight the Shoshoni, Assiniboine and Sioux. They got a little below the confluence of the Milk and Missouri Rivers, and saw two corpses wrapped in good blankets up in a tree. So they cut the bundles loose and dropped the bodies to the ground. The blankets, of white-man make, were a novelty to the Gros Ventres at the time. The men unwrapped the blankets and cut them up for leggings.

"That same night one of the Gros Ventres took ill. As the night wore on he got worse and worse. The men began to suspect: 'These two must have died of smallpox.' The sick man died after sun-up in the morning. They became panic-stricken. 'Sure enough,' they said, 'that's smallpox.' They decided to rush back to the main camp.

"On the way back every night one or more men died. Only a few got back alive. Most of the party died on the way back. When

[28] The incident probably is part of the tradition of the smallpox epidemic of 1780. Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 34.

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CHAPTER III

THE FLAT PIPE RITUAL

General Features

Before describing the Flat Pipe rituals in detail, we shall in the interest of clarity take up certain more general features. Some of these are distinctive of the Flat Pipe ritual; others are shared in common with the Feathered Pipe ritual.

Distinctive of the Flat Pipe ritual are earth and water or flood association, peppermint, the number three, and rattles.

As The Boy put it: "The Flat Pipe belongs on the ground, on the surface of the earth, while the Feathered Pipe belongs up above the earth." Or in Coming Daylight's words: "The Flat Pipe comes from the water." The reference here is to the respective origin stories of the two pipes, the Flat Pipe having been given by Earth-maker at the great flood after dry land was made, the Feathered Pipe by Bha'a, the thunder being, during a storm and from the sky. (For details see Nos. 3 and 6 in Appendix.) When the Flat Pipe ceremony was carried out in 1938, the ritual was badly garbled, and the proper offerings were not made. A very destructive flood which shortly after this occurred at Hays where the ceremony was held was attributed to the ill treatment to which the Flat Pipe had just been submitted. The Feathered Pipe is associated with thunderstorms rather than with floods.

In conformity with this ground and water association, the ritual plant used for laving, chewing and incensing in the Flat Pipe ritual was peppermint which "comes from the lowlands down on the ground," "from right along the water," in contrast to the use in the Feathered Pipe and other pipe rituals of sweet-pine needles which "come from up in the hills," "from high altitudes." The peppermint used was not "just every peppermint," not that which grows along streams but that which grows around springs. Coming Daylight used to pick it for her uncle when he was keeper of the

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narrow at one temple, broader in front, and narrow at the other temple, to represent the sky and the region above; another under the jawbones and chin, from ear to ear likewise narrow near the ear, broader under the chin, and narrow at the other ear, to represent the earth or dry land. Then with a stamp, made of a stick having a cross of four equal-length arms carved in relief on its end, and dipped into the paint, crosses in red were imprinted on each cheek bone of the adults, on the bridge of the nose according to The Boy, or on the forehead according to Thick, and on both cheeks. This cross-shaped imprint represented the morning star (called simply "the cross" [not "the cross star"] in Gros Ventre), so The Boy and Thick conjectured on their own, but this they never heard from the old people. This painting meant much, it seems, to the people; as Coming Daylight expressed it: "It was a great thing to get painted at Flat Pipe ceremonies." As the people were painted they filed out clockwise. The rite ordinarily took a long time and only ended when the last of the people quit coming in. During it the strict silence was not observed by the ex-keepers and other privileged persons in the lodge; they chatted and smoked freely.

Two other songs (No. 40 and No. 41), both wordless, were now sung by the keeper and the small groups in the lodge. After the first of these two songs the keeper painted with red paint the sacred objects kept in the Pipe bundle: the Pipe case proper, the bird skins, the rattles, and so forth. After the second, the co-keeper painted the sacred objects connected with the Pipe but not kept in the bundle: the tripod, pipe saddle and so forth. Meanwhile or at the end of the painting, the keeper told further details regarding the history and significance of the Flat Pipe and the sacred objects associated with it. After all this a long recess was taken with free smoking and chatting.

After the recess came the third triad of songs and the re-wrapping and re-tying of the Pipe bundle. The order of the songs, as well as The Boy could remember was: The Last Child Song (No. 42), The Rope Song (No. 43), The Horse Song (No. 44), all three, wordless except for short sentences in the middle, of these were brought back by He-who-starved-to-death

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793 784 blew medicine on the woman who then recovered. If you even passed in front of the keeper, you would "drop in a cramp."

Food offered in the keeper's lodge, even on a purely social and informal occasion, had to be eaten there and could not be taken out unless some one told a personal war-deed. This taboo applied even to an ex-keeper guest, although not to the actual keeper's [576] children. The keeper could break up the gathering by emptying his own pipe—a recognized Gros Ventre convention for hosts.

● [821] If anybody threw water at the keeper or hit him with water, this would cause rain.

Where a group of men were seated in a row or crescent having a purely social smoke, the general procedure was as previously described. If the Pipe keeper were one of the group, the man passing the pipe to him on either the clockwise or return circuit would first make a gesture with it "to the rear between himself and the keeper," if you didn't do that the keeper would not accept it.

The powers of the Feathered Pipe keeper and co-keeper specifically recorded by us were similar, apart from control of storm, rain and flood and, as far as they went, to those of the Flat Pipe keeper and co-keeper. The weather control powers will be described later under Feathered Pipe ritual.

[753] Anyone who stepped in the track of the keeper or co-keeper got a fit, for the soles of their moccasins were kept treated with wild parsley.

The keeper and co-keeper acquired by reason of their office certain doctoring powers.

787 793 The keeper had marked dreaming and forecasting powers, just as the Flat Pipe keeper had, and his dreams when told to the people were "big news." In a dream he would, for instance, see animals fighting the Gros Ventres and this would be a warning to a war-raiding party to act discreetly. He would foretell from his dreams who would win in a prospective battle and how many would be killed. At the time the Flat Pipe was captured by the Assiniboine (see No. 8 in Appendix), the Feathered Pipe owner was fore-warned by the Pipe in a dream and he and his party escaped. If the keeper had a dream that foreboded evil fortune he would on waking talk to the Pipe and ask it not to let the evil

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"No, I might get fits." Little Man said: "I will eat it." This he then did. Al was worried about him and did not go to work, for he thought the old man would have fits, but actually nothing happened to him.

The Feathered Pipe was given originally by Bha'a or by the Supreme Being through Bha'a, who had control of thunderstorms. While individual petitioners in simpler rites such as covering the Pipe often addressed the Pipe itself in their prayers, and while in even more formal rites Bha'a was addressed, it appears to have been generally understood that the final word lay with the Supreme Being. The Pipe was given to pray through rather than to pray to, and Bha'a while exercising a certain autonomy in his office as ruler of thunderstorms exercised it as agent of and subordinate to the Supreme Being, and in the more formal ritual prayers of the Feathered Pipe, the Supreme Being's name always came first.

Feathered Pipe rites were carried out mostly and mainly, although not exclusively, to ask for rain and for protection against threatening thunderstorms or against lightning and destructive high winds during them, and sometimes for cessation of floods and rains. Often however major or minor rites were carried out, with or without previous promise or vow, for ends not connected with weather, to ask for cure in illness, escape from grave danger, safe return from a war expedition, and so forth. In times of drought, Bha'a would be asked for rain. In the more elaborate rites commonly held each spring, petition would be made "To have rain and [in recent decades] good crops and grass, . . . to bless the earth so everybody will be happy and healthy and no bad luck for anybody all summer, so they [all the people] will live 'till next spring,' that is, so when this time of the year comes around again they will be here."

The more solemn Feathered Pipe rites, those at least which involved the sweat-lodge ceremony and the unwrapping of the Pipe bundle, were performed only during the period of the year when thunderstorms could be expected, namely from spring through to fall, and never during the winter months. The Pipe could, however be "covered" at any time of the year. In contrast to the Flat Pipe cycle, seasonal rites proper did not occur, although some rite was

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787 way. If you want to try that, do it one day and that is enough.' So the old man told him: 'Let me know this evening what you think of it, or if you have already made up your mind what you want to do.'

787 "The old timers could pretty well tell you what kind of weather
821 you are going to have. Little Man said: 'Well I would like to go our right away today. But I don't think there is any chance of an electric storm. I would like to try that.' So the old man said: 'Well, I will see if I can find any signs of a storm or not.' He looked all around everywhere like he was looking for something. The sky looked clear. He stood there for a long time and looked around. Pretty soon there was a small cloud coming up and he said: 'You are a lucky man. You watch that cloud. I think there is going to be a big electric storm and maybe hail too. Do you think you want to try it?' Little Man said: 'Yes, I will try it.' So the old man told him: 'Now you want to be very brave. Don't let anything bluff you, because there are very few who can go through with it. It is something harder to bear.' Then he said: 'You have to be perfectly naked. You go anywhere on those hills you want. Take off your clothes and go now because the storm is coming now and it won't take long for it to get here.'

787 "So Little Man went home and took off all his clothes except his moccasins and put on a blanket or robe. He then went out, and the electric storm started from the distance with rumblings and lightning. There were a couple of other young fellows out there and he could hear them crying in different directions from him. Just as he got up there, it was just like lightning right over his head and thunder all around. He cried all the harder and didn't think of getting scared. He took off his moccasins and blanket and walked around crying and praying.

"While he was doing that, all at once great big hailstones came and it certainly hurt him. He had bruises all over him. When the hail was just over he laid down, kind of tired, and just a little while after that somebody told him: 'Take that hailstone there right by you and swallow it.' He looked and sure enough there was a big hailstone right by him. He was not to chew it but to swallow it whole. He took it and thought: 'Well, if you tell me

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In two of the battles described by The Boy weather power was used. In one, when seven Gros Ventre warriors were surrounded in a piece of brush by a body of Crows and the latter set fire to the brush to rout the Gros Ventres out, one Gros Ventre, a quiet and unassuming man, "used a bone whistle and did other things," and shortly rain came and put out the fire. This man's war-charm, an otter skin, was captured by the Crows in this battle, and the Gros Ventres learned later from the Crows that whenever the latter mounted this otter skin trophy on a pole, as at a scalp dance, rain came with thunder and lightning. Finally the Crows got scared, carried the otter skin over on the hills and left it there, "and the thunder left them alone."

In another battle, this time with a party of Sioux, the Gros Ventres had taken a scalp, and were retreating, with the Sioux in pursuit. Morning-Star-Appears (Rising Cross), a Gros Ventre warrier who had a ghost helper, "sang a song, used a robe as cover to enclose himself and said, 'We wish rain.' " In no time a heavy cloudburst, with thunder and lightning broke, and the Gros Ventres,—among them Stiffarm, then a very young man,—escaped under cover of the rain and semi-darkness.[19]

Garter Snake, daughter of Bull Lodge, gave us the following story:

"The Crows were camping on the north bank of the Yellowstone when a May snowstorm came. It snowed four days and four nights, and the snow drifted far up the lodge sides and horse-high, except where blown clear on elevated exposed spots. On the fourth day, at noon, the Crows came to Bull Lodge with a pipe and some things. They offered him the pipe and of course he didn't take it right away, but said: 'What is this for?' They said: 'We know you are a holy man [one with power]. You [can] do almost anything and we are asking you to make this storm quit. If you don't we shall all perish.' He told them: 'All right, that is easy.' And they gave him that stuff: 'Here are the things we give you.'

"So he told his wife: 'Stand up a pole good and solid in the back of the lodge.' She did so. Then he said: 'Take down that shield.' This was the shield he had dreamed about. He then

[19] See Cooper, 1944, p. 72.

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778 smudged the shield and hung it up on the pole, then he got his
821 Feather Pipe drum and started to sing. As he sang the third time, and of course prayed and went through the [ritual] motions, and a sun ray showed right on the shield. The Crows were in the lodge and they all saw this and they prayed. And he said: 'I have one more song.' So he sang the fourth one and after he got through he said to one of the men: 'You go out and see what has happened.' The man went out and it was still snowing but right in the heavens was a little round hole [clear spot] which gradually enlarged and the sun shone. That is how Bull Lodge cleared the weather."

789 We now come to use of powers of legerdemain. Such powers were ordinarily looked upon as "supernatural" in origin and nature. We have already given many illustrations of such legerdemain as integral elements in ritual power-use, we shall now give the illustrations of it as used in purely or predominantly secular contexts.

Such feats are attributed to various individuals. According to Mary Ereaux, Sits-in-the-Midddle on one occasion when the party was out of tea, "made tea for them and they thought that was great." An unnamed medicine man was reputed to be able to swallow a "chunk of coal" [probably hot embers].

The two most outstanding masters of legerdemain known to our informants were Bull Lodge (d. ca. 1886) and Stiffarm (d. ca. 1935). According to Al Chandler, Stiffarm got his legerdemain power from Bull Lodge, and actually his feats and procedures (such as use of a handkerchief) duplicate almost exactly Bull Lodge's so far as they go.

Here follows our fullest account of Bull Lodge's feats, as given us by his daughter, Garter Snake, with some details interpolated in parentheses, from Charles Buckman (CB) and Al Chandler (AC).

"When my father slept at Baldy [Baldy Butte, in the Bear Paws] . . . he was given the power of doctoring, and he was given wealth, and the power then to make tobacco, matches, sugar, tea, and even coffee. These are the articles he made. In winter time his sons would go out and get cherry brush. He would put

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Singer's own guilt feeling at her delay in fulfilling her vow to amputate her finger joint is clear from her dream (infra under "Dreams"). The more recent case of the death by lightning of the young man who put off buying the Feathered Pipe cloth wrapping he had promised, as mentioned earlier (supra, p. 132), was popularly interpreted as perhaps a punishment. Another case told us by The Boy illustrated the same belief in punishment for breach of vow. 782

"Not long ago [in The Boy's lifetime] a certain man's relative was sick, and he vowed to the Supreme Being to undergo solitary self-torture out on the hills all day so the relative would recover. The relative did recover. But time went on, and the vower did not carry out his vow that summer or that year. Next summer he had a dream and in the dream someone asked him: 'When are you going to carry out your vow?' Still the vower let the matter go. He had the same dream four times and each time was asked the same question. 782 821

"After the fourth time, he began to think. He was on the spot. He decided to invite some of the principal men,—the keepers of the sacred Pipes, some ex-keepers, and some others,—among them my father, Lame Bull. He told the assembled group about his dream. They studied it, and finally Lame Bull took it on himself to interpret it. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'This is not good that you dreamed that four times and that you waited so long to carry out your vow. This means you will not be called [warned] any more. I advise you to put up a sweat-lodge for me [Lame Bull was apparently Flat Pipe keeper at the time] and I will see what I can do for you to appease someone you have made angry. Get busy right away and cut willows and get rocks and wood for a sweat-lodge rite tomorrow. I will pray for you at the sweat-lodge rite so that you may be released and absolved from any punishment that might [otherwise] come to you.'

"The vower was glad and agreed, and glad that the invitees would help. . . . But before the sweat-lodge was put up a violent thunderstorm arose. There were abundant berries around the camp and a lot of women and children out picking them were caught in the storm. I was a little boy at the time and was along

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782 821 on the berry picking. The storm spoiled the berry picking and as soon as it was over we started back to camp. The berry pickers who were in the lead on the way back stopped on a ridge in view of the camp and at once saw that something was wrong there. When they got to camp they found that the vower and his boy had been killed and his wife stunned by lightning. She was put in rain water and came to. The vower had just come back from getting the things for the sweat-lodge and was eating with his wife and boy when the storm passed over the camp.

"Another man had gone out on horseback . . . and cried all through the storm . . . after the storm had passed and the sun was shining . . . a cloud was seen to come back and stop right over the camp circle and he saw lightning and heard thunder at the same time, and he passed out, but only for a moment. When he came to, his ears were ringing and he was facing in the opposite direction. So he turned around again and looked and saw this cloud going back toward the rest of the storm [clouds]. . . .

"The people all ran to the vower and found him and his wife and boy lying there. . . . The boy's head [hair] was all curly and singed, and there was some little sage brush in his hair and they wondered how it got there. The people there always believed that the man and his boy were killed because the former did not carry out his vow. His wife is still living. This man was not given the chance to make up for his neglect. . . ."

"The man," The Boy added, "had made the vow, not to Bha'a, the storm being, but to someone else, the Supreme Being. In this case the Supreme Being employed or delegated Bha'a to mete out punishment to the man who failed to fulfill his vow."

Oaths

782 By oaths we here understand solemn appeals to the supernatural world in witness to the truth of a statement or to the binding character of a promise,—the first being assertory oaths, the second promissory ones. Whether promissory oaths were taken by the Gros Ventres is not clear. A possible instance was Good Singer's promise, after being captured and made to dance over her husband's body, of a Sacrifice Dance, the promise itself having been

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howls at the moon, someone is going to die; the dog will be killed to head off the misfortune." It is also unlucky if a dog and a coyote "kind of quarrel, the one howling frequently and the other answering back." Hoot owls were thought to be ghosts (supra, p. 27). If an owl alighted on the tent or house, or hooted nearby on a bush, this portended the death of someone. If one or more crows flew across one's path and cawed when one was going out hunting, this meant good luck. 787

Of the supernatural order were also many of the intimations imparted in dreams, and many gotten in connection with the sacred Pipes, such as those from the quivering of the pipe bundle, the look of the human face in the Feathered Pipe bundle, and so forth.

An eclipse of the sun was an omen of some coming sickness, some epidemic like smallpox. Coming Daylight stated that her old grandmother "always noticed that an eclipse [of the sun] was followed by smallpox." Coming Daylight described her own personal reaction during an eclipse. 787 821

"I had been sent after water. . . . All of a sudden it got dark. The first thing I did was to grab on to a bunch of willows. I did not know what had happened and just kept hidden there. It was so dark I could not see to go anywhere. I heard people hollering: 'Come this way. Where are you?' But I was so frightened I just hung on to the willows as though someone were going to take me away. Finally it got to be lighter, and I took the water home."

Singer's account of her experience during an eclipse [the same one?] gives some details also on tribal belief and practice. She and another young woman were the only ones at home.

"We noticed it was getting darker and darker, although it was in the afternoon about this time of the year [mid-August]. We began to scream and cry and we did not know what was going to happen. It was really an eclipse of the sun. The men, and everyone left in camp at the time, just lay down on the ground. Finally they got up and said: 'That is a sign we are going to have smallpox.' Everybody who had a gun just shot at the sun. The reason for shooting was that it [the eclipse] was going to bring some kind of disease. They thought it was a warning." Coming Daylight here explained: "When they shoot they are trying to scare it to get rid of the sickness."